GARY MANGIACOPA ARCHIVE
==========
Title: B7F7I1
Slug: b7f7i1
Categories: Medical Mysteries
Source: https://garymangiacopraarchive.com/b7f7i1
Pages: 4 scanned, 4 extracted
OCR: Google Vision API (document_text_detection)
Processed: 2026-06-06
==========

NEWSPAPER: THE WASHINGTON POST
LOCATION: WASHINGTON, D.C.
DATE: 25 MARCH
1956
SUNDAY SUPPLEMENT MAGAZINE: THE AMERICAN WEEKLY
PAGE 14-16

[PAGE BREAK]

In the Amazon's Green Hell-
Jungle Mag
My jaw was already paralyzed. . I knew my brain
would go next
. "Keep my gun," I told Inez. "You'll need it"
By Colonel LEONARD CLARK
Explorer, adventurer and author of "The Rivers Ran East"
AS TOLD TO J. P. FOLINSBEE

In September, 1946, the U. S. Military Attache in Quito, Ecuador, reported to my family that I had been killed by Huambiza Jivaro headhunters somewhere in the jungles of the Western Amazon. Four months earlier, I had ventured into the mysterious, silent land east of the Andes, on rivers seldom explored by white men, though scores, over the years, had lost their lives in the attempt. I was after three things-new information for explorers, rare jungle medicines, and gold.

Apart from the main river highways, the teeming jungles of the Amazon Basin are still an uncharted green hell. Fatal diseases, starvation, deadly reptiles, man-eating fish and innumerable Indian tribes lurk in the sunless forests-all ready to surround the unwary with death in a hundred creeping or violent forms. Untotaled numbers of white soldiers, adventurers and explorers-like the famed Colonel P. H. Fawcett-have disappeared in those dense rain forests without a trace. And yet, year after year, other eager fortune hunters filter into the Amazon from the four corners of the earth.

Like Inez Pokorny. I first met Inez at Iquitos-the sweltering Timbuctoo of the Western Amazon. A slim, strong utterly fearless girl, she had lived 10 months with Indian tribes during her amazing ascent of the Amazon from its Atlantic mouth. At Iquitos, the last vestiges

of any real civilization end. Yet, despite the grim warnings of traders and the exasperated protests of officials, she was determined to push further westward through country infested with warring tribes of Jivaro headhunters. Her curious ambition: to become the first white woman in history to travel the Amazon River from sea to sea.

I arrived at Iquitos by an even less pleasant route. In my search for jungle medicines, I had plunged into the Amazon from the Peruvian side, with one white partner, Jorge Mendoza, an adventurous young Peruvian rancher. We were almost without equipment-or the funds to buy It. At the brink of the unknown we purchased from a slave trader-for about $15 each-five "tamed" Indians to paddle our crude balsa rafts. Had we heeded warnings of the horrors that lay downriver on the Perene, our rafts never would have been launched.

By the time we saw a white man again, four of our Indian paddlers were dead-murdered by Indians attacking from ambush. In self-defense, we had killed at least a dozen in return. Twice we lost everything not tied to our bodies when our rafts capsized in waterfalls alive with deadly pana fish.

For two frightful days, we were held prisoner in the hut of a powerful brujo (witch doctor)-whose body was ceremoniously wound in the evil-smelling akin of a huge anaconda snake. Under the mysterious influence of the Soul Vine, he had decided I possessed magical powers. In accordance with the accepted cannibal practices of his tribe, he planned to devour my heart so my "white magic" would pass into his heart and brain. Time and again, the authorities told us later, Indian drums throbbed

the news that our party had been completely wiped out. Each time, some miracle kept us alive.

Yet, through the strangely twisted codes of the Amazon, it was the amazing and little known skill of these same savage witch doctors that later saved my ufe when death was as certain as blowing out a match.

At Pucalpa-about the mid-point of our anticipated journey Jorge Mendoza received news of his father's death. He returned home with an armed party of traders, and I continued on alone to Iquitos. There, after weeks of negotiation and official red tape, I finally arranged passage on a power launch bound upriver.

My undisclosed goal-charted on old maps I carried in a money belt around my waist-lay 700 uncertain miles west in the Amazon. There, according to the maps it had taken almost my last cent to buy, lay the ruins of the lost cities of El Dorado-the seven "cities of gold" founded by the Spaniards more than 400 years before. I was determined to find them and escape back across the

Andes with every pound of the precious metal I could carry. I later found what I believe to be five of these citles. I, and others after me, have brought out some of the gold. But that is not my story here.

[y companions on the river launch were a jovial Ger-Man trader and the tireless lady explorer, Inez Pokorny. From the first, misfortune haunted us like a shadow. Less than 100 miles upriver, our engine broke down, and the launch had to be floated back to Iquitos for repairs. Rather than risk further delays, Inez and I contracted, through a Peruvian river trader, for an Indian dug-out canoe and three paddlers to carry us another 200 miles upriver to the trading post at Tres Unidos. None of us knew, at the time, that Tres Unidos had been swept away three weeks before by a flash flood, with all its inhabitants drowned.

Our second day by canoe took us deep into head-hunter territory. Jivaro war drums pounded monoto-nously around us in the jungle night. Whenever we stopped to camp, we were soon surrounded by silent, evil-looking headhunters whose faces were painted in hideous streaks of red, white and black pigments. Many wore the coarse black hair of victims as a kind of belt around their naked waists.

It was there, days from any white settlement, that disaster struck.

We were camped for the night on the wreckage of a balsa raft of the kind used by Indians to float snake and crocodile hides to the scattered trading posts down-river. For once, the drums were allent, and we were able to sleep without standing guard.

It must have been about two o'clock in the morning when I awoke suddenly, with a nightmarish sense of imminent danger. Moving my hand with great caution, I located my flashlight and snapped it on.

Just beyond my mosquito net, less than a foot from my face, the light revealed an Immense snake colled and

"The big automatic roared and
ready to strike. I knew the net offered no
tection. The make's body was a bloated
inches thick, black splotched with yellow,
its head was a flat, armored triangle the
of an iron. I recognized it instantly
nacanaca-one of the deadliest serpents o
Ever
Amazon. My fingers turned to ice.
flicker of an eyelid, I knew, would cause
strike.

Very slowly, holding the blinding light l
anake's eyes, I moved my foot and touched
through her net, which was some two feet

Her voice told me she understood there

something dangerous.
"What is it?" she whispered. "Jivaros
When I didn't reply, she repeated the
tion. I dared not speak.
My life was in her hands. Whatever
she took would have to be completely on her
I knew she had no gun of her own, and th

[PAGE BREAK]

STOP PAIN
INSTANTLY
COMBAT INFECTION
PROMOTE HEALING
WITH STAINLESS
Campho-
Phenique
LIQUID
WHEN USED ON
PIMPLES-ACNE
CAMPHO-PHENIQUE HELPS
- PREVENT THEIR SPREAD
AND RE-INFECTION.
It's wonderful, too,
for fever blisters,
cold sores, gum
boils, cuts and
scratches, minor
book
burns caused by
matches, hot
cooking utensils,
hot water or steam.
Campho-Phenique
relieves itching
insect bites, poison
of
ivy, etc. Just apply
Campho-Phenique next time
and see how fast this pain-
relieving antiseptic goes to
work. And it doesn't stain
the skin! Get a bottle today.
FOR ATHLETE'S FOOTUSE
CAMPHO-PHENIQUE
POWDER
In The Yellow Shaker Con
1. Checks Fungus Growth.
2. Prevents Its Spread.
3. Stops Itching
4. Promotes Rapid Healing.
FREE

Canada-Newfoundland
COLLECTION
Including Early Ins
Commemoratives, Pie-
torials, and mah Tam Phi Bot of
Faxdinating Triangle lamps Pins Bet
of Und British Colonies Plus Large
Stamp Book AD Four Offers F
Sradle to coNET
EMPIRE STAMP CORP Dept. AW.
Terenta, Canada
The last
word on
what's
right
• over 700 pages
[AD] $5.50 regular,
56 thumb-
Indexed
DOUBLEDAY
EAT ANYTHING WITH
FALSE TEETH!
Trouble with plates that slip,
rock, cause sore gums? Try
Brimms Plasti-Liner.One application makes
plates fit suply without pounder or passe,
Brimes Plasti-Liner hardens permanently
to your plate. Relines, refies loose plates in
away so powder or peste can do. No need
to pass up favorite foods. With plates
held firmly by Plasti-Liner, YOU CAN EAT
ANTTING Simply lay soft strip of Plasti
Liner on troublesome upper or lower. Dice
and it molds perfectly. Eary low, tasteless,
odorless, harmless to you and plates. Re
moveble as directed. Money back guaran
tee. At your drug counter, Only $1.50.
BRIMMS PLASTI-LINER

SCULPTURE WITH A PUNCH
H
JUNGLE MAGIC SAVED MY LIFE (Continued from preceding page)
I
I fell back, for the pain was becoming unbearable. The
venom was spreading. My jaw was already paralyzed.
knew my brain would go next, and I was fighting for some
kind of inner composure to prepare myself for what I knew
would be a deep, deep sleep. I felt the Indians moving
close, and presently all three were bending over me Inez
held the light, and its beam made my eyes feel like flame.
In a crazy way, my mind kept flashing back to the witch
doctors I had seen at work along the Perene. I felt like one

of their helpless victims, and any moment, I expected a shattering blow to crush in my skull.
Instead, the Indians began sticking me all over the face, throat and chest with what felt like long, dull hypodermic needles. I remember trying to smile as the sickening waves of blackness washed higher and higher...
My next memories were equally strange. I seemed to be clawing my way out of a pit of tar. I could see nothing. When I finally touched my eyes, and found them open, I had a foolish notion that I was dead. Then, as my brain cleared further, I decided I was alive and that it was the middle of the night. Finally, a shadow wavered above me, and I smelled the faint odor of an Indian. Something cold was gently laid across my face, and the shadow moved away. It was only then that I knew it must be broad daylight.
Next I heard Inez's voice. "It's all right," she said.
"I'm blind," I said.
"The Indians are helping you," she replied. "They said you would be blind. Can you see anything at all?"
"I can tell it's daylight. That's all."
"We've been here on the raft for four days and nights," she told me.
"Have you had anything to eat?"
"The Indians have speared some fish." She paused to feed me a few mouthfuls of cold, bolled flesh. "The second day I was sure you were going to die. Your head and neck were swollen to twice their usual size," she went on. "The Indians have been bolling something in a pot. Every hour they stick you all over the body with a long thorn they keep dipping into the stuff. It smells awful."
H
++,
SHIRVAN, AN
"What do they call it?" I asked.
"Sanango. It's some sort of witch brew. They say the blindness is from venom that got into your eyes. They're trying several remedies, other things they learned from the brujos.
That's what is on your eyes now. A black liquid they pour on a cloth."
As she spoke, I drifted eerily back into sleep. When I again awakened, it was dark, and I could dimly see Inez standing above me, waving the flashlight back and forth.
"I can see," I shouted. "I can see you and the light!" Inez laughed, and snapped the light on and off like a little girl.
"I don't know how," she answered. "Your eyes are blood red, and the pupils are covered by a thick white film. The Indians say it will take weeks before they clear.".
At dawn I felt strong enough to eat a big meal of fish, and A we loaded the dug-out canoe. Presently we were afloat again in the fast current. By holding my upper eyelids open

with my thumbs, I could make out the misty shapes of trees and the Indians and the canoe. Inez's face swam into focus beside me. She looked gaunt and utterly exhausted.
Moments later I realized we were not floating smoothly with the current. The tireless Indians were paddling furiously, and the dug-out canoe was inching forward like a stalling automobile. It could mean only one thing.
"We're headed upstream?" I asked incredulously.
"Upstream." Inez's mouth was set with determination. "For the Andes, where we were headed in the first place."
I lay back, astonished anew by this amazing woman, astonished by the stony-faced Indians who had doctored me, without sleep, for four days and nights. I knew there was no way to thank them. They had become no friendlier than before. The whole ordeal left them as cold and aloof as ever. They had simply obeyed the unwritten code of the jungle to help any companion on a journey.
AA

[PAGE BREAK]

ic Saved My Life
ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT RIGGS
I saw the snake's gaping mouth flash against the net. Hot venom spurted into my eyes. The driving fangs buried themselves in my neck."
pro-
four
while
size
as &
the
the
it to
the
Inez
away.
was
ques-
ction
OWNL.
he icy
sweat began to run in rivulets down my neck.
Almost subconsciously, I heard Inez stir. I felt her hand creep beneath my head, her fingers probing for my automatic. Slowly, the cold metal withdrew.
The utter silence was the worst of it. I dared not turn my eyes for even an instant from the glittering head of the snake, and our deadly, hypnotic duel stretched into what seemed endless time. Then the big automatic roared beside my head and the snake struck.

I saw its gaping mouth flash against the net, its white fangs swing down from their cottony pit-seats. As Its mouth crashed into the net, hot venom spurted into my eyes. I twisted away, and felt the driving fangs bury themselves deep In my neck. In one cold and awful retaliation, I wrenched the serpent from my body and hurled it into the darkness, My hands were sticky with blood, and I knew that Inez's shot must have blasted right through the heavy pile of coils.

As I hurled the snake, Inez began to scream. Everything was completely dark, since I had dropped the light. I fumbled and recovered it. The nacanaca lay some five feet away, colling and writhing in its own death agony.

Pain scorched through my neck as I saw our three Indian paddlers on their feet, moving like silent black shadows. One crossed to the dying snake, and holding its head down with the butt of his musket, examined It minutely. Finally he grunted, and one of the other Indians leaped off the raft into the water. I could hear him splashing shoreward.

My first rational thought was to bleed the wounds, splitting the flesh away from the fang holes with my sheath knife. It took only a moment to realize this was hopeless. The fangs had sunk in right alongside the jugular vein.

A tourniquet was out of the question. I'd have choked myself with It. Somehow, I managed a rather shaky laugh.

"For heaven's sake. Control yourself!" Inez cried.

"Oh, be quiet! I'm all right. That snake was a nacanaca. That means I have no more than four or five minutes. So listen carefully, Bury me here at daylight. Then turn back to Iquitos. It's certain death for a woman to try to get through Jivaro country alone. Mall my maps and my notes to my brother Laurence-you'll find his address somewhere. Is that clear?"

"Yes," she said. "I'll take care of everything. But you can't die. There must be something we can do."

I grabbed her arm, hard, for she had began to tremble with shock. "Take it easy," I told her. "There is nothing on earth you can do. Keep my gun. You will need it before you get back to Iquitos." (Continued on following page)